

CAIVE TELLS HOW SHE WILL SING HER GREAT ROLE OF "MARGUERITE."

IN THE Uffizi gallery stands a statue of Hebe, the goddess of youth and eternal Spring. No man who has seen this wonderful carving can ever forget it. Each line, each curve seems to glow with vitality and joyful spirits. The proportions of the figure are faultless. In the pulse of the head there is an archness that is irresistibly captivating. In the chiselling of the lips there is a wealth of affection and passion. The arm is outstretched, the hand beckons, the shoulders, whose softness not even the marble can hide, allure and tantalize. Close your eyes and picture this statue clad in an amazing house gown, whose artistic instinct rebelled against the thought of concealing the beautiful curves of neck and shoulder. Color the hair a dark brown, soft and wavy and lustrous. Now like Pygmalion, endow the creature with life, and, lo!

"Yes, Mme. Calve will be pleased to see you."

And with a rustle of silks the radiant Carmen stands before the humble interviewer, her dark eyes shining and an expanse of dazzling white skin gleaming and heaving—the Hebe of the Uffizi comes to life.

"Et voilà," she exclaims, "what can I do for you?"

"Madame might say something," brightly suggests the interviewer, struggling meanwhile to gather his wandering senses. Madame laughs—her laugh is like the tinkling of chimes—and says archly:

"That is very good. You wish me to do both the questioning and the answering. Very well, only tell me when you want me to stop."

Madame stuns into a chair, places her hands upon her bosom and, with twinkling eyes, begins:

"Mme. Calve, how do you feel? I feel pretty well, thank you. Mme. Calve, will you sing any new roles this season? Yes, several. I am busy preparing for 'Faust.' Ah, is that so? Yes."

But she could remain herself no longer, and burst into merry laughter that filled all the room with melody.

"Now, I have given you a start," she said.

"How is it that Madame does not speak English?" The conversation had been carried on in French.

"Oh, I'm terribly lazy, you know." She smiled very sweetly. "I'm the laziest woman that ever lived. I learned Latin at school and afterward Italian, but I never had a chance to study English until now. And now, as I said, I am too lazy to do anything of the kind."

There came an interruption in the form of two visitors. They were handsome women, fashionably dressed, of middle age and of Parisian vivacity. They stood in the doorway, pointing to Calve, their faces glowing with pleasure.

"Look at her!" one of them exclaimed.

"Not a day older, is she?" cried the other.



"When I work, I work very hard, and it is a great strain upon me."

"And how does Madame occupy her spare time?"

"Spare time? Ma foi! I haven't any! Spare time? Oh, dear! To think of my having spare time!"

"Then Madame is a hustler, comme on dit en Anglais?"

"Hustler? Qu'est-ce que c'est hustler? Ah, oui!"

And Madame laughed merrily in appreciation of New York slang.

"Yes, I am a hustler. Of course, I drive a great deal, and I go shopping, and I read and I write a great deal, and I entertain a great many friends, and—let me see—what else do I do? Oh, yes. I go to concerts and I let myself be bored, but as a rule I work."

Madame reflected for a moment and then:

"After all, perhaps I enjoy life a little more than I thought I did."

Then she smiled. Madame's smile is a joy in itself. It illumines all her countenance, sparkles in her eyes, dimples her cheeks—even her finger tips seem to smile when Madame smiles.

"And what does Madame read?"

Calve's brow wrinkled in mock seriousness.

"Mostly scientific works," she said demurely. "Isn't it strange? I have a weakness for dry books. The book that gives me the greatest pleasure is the one that it takes the greatest trouble to understand. I am greatly interested in the marvels of science, in inventions and discoveries, and I love to read about them."

"Nothing lighter?"

"I do not care much for fiction. It is too light"—and when Madame says light, lo! it is light—and it does not improve the mind. It is a waste of time. The lightest thing that I have read this year has been Goethe's 'Faust.'"

(Shades of Aristophanes!)

"And Madame considers 'Faust' light?"

"By no means. It is a work of exquisite art. Yet I would not have read it and still had it as carefully as I did had it not a direct bearing upon my profession."

"And did Madame gain impressions?"

"Indeed I did! Each time I read that wonderful story I learn something new. This little thing that I have discovered may interest you. The tragedy of 'Faust' is supposed to have taken place in the Middle Ages, and it is the duty of an actor to present every detail of his life and manners of the time as accurately as possible."

Now, in the Middle Ages it was a law that only queens and empresses were allowed to wear white—pure white. That color was, in a measure, the badge of their royalty. A peasant woman was not allowed to wear it. Why, therefore, should Marguerite, who was, after all, only a peasant woman, wear white upon the stage? Is it not so?"

There was no denying it.

"Faust is the gem of France, and I—I am French, Madame Melba is an Australian."

"If she wears white it is not true to history. It is not in accord with the customs of the times. It is wrong. N'est-ce pas?"

"Sure!"

"Therefore, you see, I could never think of appearing as Marguerite clad in white."

"What color does Madame choose?"

"That is unimportant. As long as it is not white it does not matter very much. Gray, brown, black—almost any subdued color will do. The important thing then becomes the design of the costume. I have tried as far as possible to follow Tietz's famous painting of Marguerite, with slight alterations suggested by other things that I have come across in the study of mediæval history."

"Madame is quite erudite!"

You should have heard Calve laugh! She placed her snow-white hands upon her whiter bosom, and leaning back in her chair, burst into merriment.

"Monsieur flatters me. Indeed, Monsieur honors me greatly! But I am not a bit erudite. In fact, I am ignorant. Very, very ignorant. Monsieur never saw such an ignorant old woman as I!"

Ignorant! Old! Monsieur felt chills creeping down his spine, and Monsieur shivered.

"Oh, Madame!"

"But I do not wish to convey the impression that I have anything but admiration and respect and affection for Madame Melba. She is a brilliant woman. The reason that I have never heard her in 'Faust' is that I rarely go to the opera when I am not singing. My health will not permit it."

"Is Madame in delicate health?"

Madame smiled enchantingly.

"I know I do not look very weak, but, as a matter of fact, I am not as strong as you might think."

"The matter conclusively"—and, therefore, she can have no more right to sing Marguerite than I."

Of course not.

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"I'm the Laziest Woman That Ever Lived. I Think It Is Rather Nice to Be Lazy."

"Oh, my dear girls," exclaimed Calve. "My dear, dear friends! I'm so glad to see you again."

They kissed her upon the cheeks and the lips, and the younger of the women added a kiss upon Madame's beautiful neck—which left a tiny red spot. Then, being French and being women, they all began to chat at the same time. One of the women espied the interviewer, and, without a moment's warning, confronted him.

"Isn't she beautiful?"

"Oul!"

Then Calve kissed them again and they kissed her and took their departure, saying they would come the next day.

"Now," she continued, smoothing her gown, "where did I leave off? Oh, yes, I was telling you that I am lazy. I think it's rather nice to be lazy, don't you? I wouldn't care to be bustling about all the time."

"What does Madame do most of the day?"

"Mostly nothing. I dawdle a great deal. The only real work I do is to practise and rehearse. I'm busy now with 'Faust' and 'l'Africaine.' I have often sung Marguerite before, but this will be my first appearance in 'l'Africaine.'"

"The New York public has grown accustomed to Melba's Marguerite, but has never seen Calve's."

Madame's pretty brow wrinkled into a slight frown.

"I have never seen Melba's Marguerite, and, therefore, I do not know whether mine will differ from hers or not."

"Then there will be no rivalry?"

Madame's brilliant eyes expressed half a dozen different emotions in as many seconds.

"Rivalry? Ma foi, no! Melba is a great artist. I admire her very much. She has often sung Carmen; why should I not sing Marguerite? Surely Gounod did not write that beautiful opera for one singer! It is the gem of France, and I—I am French!"

There was a dainty shrug that explained this point with great clearness.

"Madame Melba is an Australian," she added, with a smile, "and, therefore, here Calve placed both her hands upon her bosom and poised her head upon one side, thereby settling

her ligaments." "says he can keep it up hours on end;" "positively no pain;" "ligaments play no part in his locomotion;" and "the most extraordinary thing, gentlemen, is that, though he hasn't any ligaments to speak of, he can walk quite easily."

"And," concluded the lecturer, as the Yogi suddenly ceased his movements of wrenched legs and wreathing hands, "he is a

man forty-five years of age."

The Yogi smiled and bowed, and began calmly to twist his turban, and replace it on his shiny hair, while the lecturer invited the students and spectators to make comments or afford explanations. But neither comments nor explanations were numerous. One distinguished anatomist who was present remarked that if the Yogi's movements were a short cut to paradise the road

thither must be long and rougher in India than in England; but although this utterance was greeted with a rosy laugh, and, although a controversy divided the anatomists as to whether the Yogi's ligaments were susceptible of being twisted in one way or two, the majority of those present were content to regard him as the wonder that he is. The Yogi, at any rate, seemed well satisfied.

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